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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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September 30, 2005

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Mike Flanagan 

**SUBJECT:** Report on Field Review of Universal Education Vision and Principles  
Draft Document

In January 2005 the State Board of Education (Board) received the report of the Universal Education Referent Group. The draft document, Universal Education Vision and Principles, represented the work of a referent group that had been convened in 2004. Following discussion of the draft document, the Board requested its distribution for field review.

The field review was implemented using a Zoomerang field review survey. Referent group members and their constituent organizations, MDE staff, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), the IDEA Partnership, and all relevant groups and organizations were invited to comment.

Attachment A is an executive summary of the field review. Attachment B is the complete summary of the field review. Attachment C is the original draft document. The Board will be asked to adopt the Universal Education Vision and Principles to be used as a policy framework and to disseminate to the field.

**Attachments**

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## UNIVERSAL EDUCATION SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 2005

At the request of the State Board of Education, in February, 2005, the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE-EIS) distributed:

- 1) the Universal Education Vision and Principles draft document and
- 2) a Zoomerang field review survey

to all Michigan Department of Education (MDE) staff and to members of the Universal Education referent group. Each was requested to forward the document and survey to their listservs/e-mail groups who would have an investment in Universal Education.

Within the OSE-EIS, the document and survey were distributed to all special education directors/supervisors, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and members of the IDEA partnership (with representatives from organizations such as the Michigan Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, Michigan Education Association, Michigan Federation of Teachers and School Related Personnel, etc.). Each was requested to forward these documents to their constituents.

The following summary reflects patterns of survey responses.

### Overall Pattern of Responses

Ninety (90) individuals responded to the survey. Not all individuals responded to all questions on the survey. The total number of responses to each portion of the survey is indicated in the pertinent sections. In addition, the number of additional comments received is noted for each question.

The overall pattern of response showed strong support for the draft Vision and Principles of Universal Education. The majority of respondents indicated that:

- All populations at risk were represented by the vision of Universal Education in the draft document (Question 1 - 83%);
- There are no key principles of Universal Education that need to be added (Question 2 - 68%);
- The Universal Education draft document was clear in its language, graphics, matrix, and purpose (Question 3 - 80%);
- Respondents supported the Universal Education vision (Question 4 - 87%);
- The Universal Education Vision and Principles could be utilized in five major areas (Question 5 - 79%):
  - Teaching (28% of respondents identified this application of Universal Education)
  - Policy (24%)
  - Special Education (24%)
  - Parents and Families (13%)
  - Administration (11%)

Given the breadth of stakeholders and populations represented in the Universal Education Vision, the range of concerns also bears mention. **Respondents' concerns represented three major themes, along with two general questions.**

**1. Language Concerns**

- a. Terms (*all, throw-away youth, disability, and full inclusion* questioned);
- b. Vagueness of educational terminology.

**2. Implementation Concerns**

- a. Questions on the purpose and uses for this document;
- b. Goals, objectives and expected results for Universal Education;
- c. Responsibilities for action or implementation of Universal Education;
- d. Impact of implementation on teachers;
- e. Teacher training and professional development for staff; and

**3. Funding Concerns**

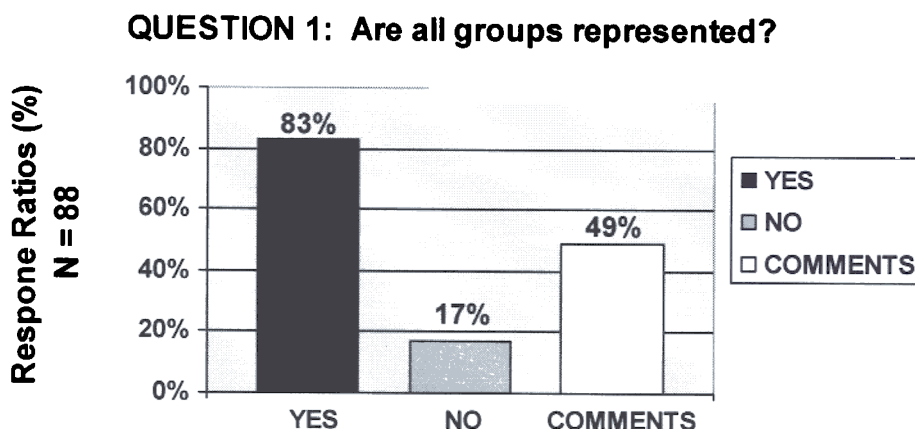
- a. Anticipated overall high costs of implementation;
- b. Anticipated high costs and timelines for professional development;
- c. Anticipated high costs of the teacher resources and learning supports required;
- d. Questions about whether a financial analysis should be done prior to any further action on the Universal Education Vision and Principles; and
- e. Questions on using financial incentives to enhance the implementation.

## UNIVERSAL EDUCATION SURVEY SUMMARY

### RESULTS

#### QUESTION 1: Are all groups represented?

- A majority of respondents (83%) indicated that all groups were represented
- Six respondents commented but did not submit a yes/no vote. A similar pattern was found in responses to Questions 2 - 4.



#### Who was not represented?

- Each category of students with disabilities should be represented individually.
- Children of migrant workers
- Unaccompanied refugee minors
- General education students
- Local District Boards of Education, local administrators, general public, local community, and religious groups should be included in the list of stakeholders.

#### Comments of Support

- 39% of respondents voiced support for the groups represented. A comment typical of the tone follows:
- "I especially like the inclusion of gifted in this list...typically people only think of the disadvantaged when developing such visions. This truly is for ALL children."
- Some comments went beyond the vision statement to support an individual philosophy: "I think everyone should learn together all the time no matter what kind of disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion. In order for Universal Education to work, everyone has to be included in the process."

### Comments Expressing Concern

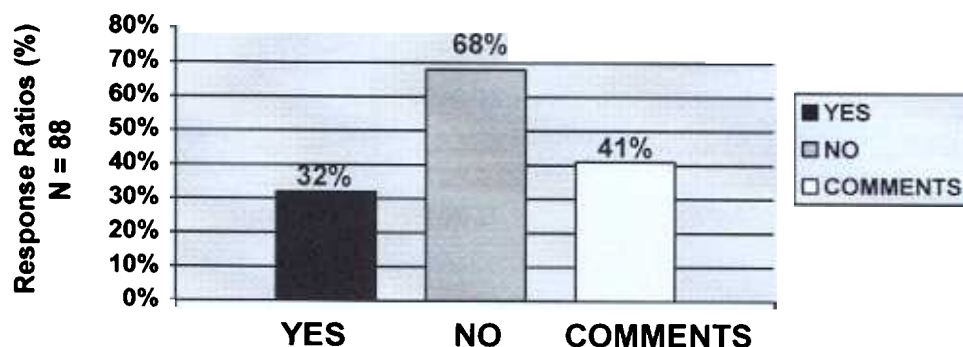
Some felt "ALL" was a vague term and questioned whether the concept was too encompassing to mandate.

- "It certainly does not relate to the educational needs of all children."
- Several respondents voiced offense at the term "Throw-Away" (used in graphic).

### QUESTION 2: Are there any key principles you would add?

- 32% noted that they would add a key principle
- 33% of respondents offered comments on the question
- 69% of "yes" respondents and 27% of "no" provided comment.
- Most comments fell under the umbrella of the three principle categories (Who, What, and How).

#### QUESTION 2: Are there any key principles to add?



### Principles that respondents would add:

- Self advocacy
- Do no harm to students

### COMMENTS ON QUESTION 2:

#### WHO: The Learning Community

- Parents
- District Boards of Education and local administrators
- Religious groups

#### WHAT: The Learning Environment/Culture

- Recognize that teachers are adult learners in our large community and need support as they grapple with new ideas.

Cannot tolerate long timelines for teachers to 'get ready' to accept all students as learners.

"Inclusion needs to be on a case-by-case basis, not based on what is best for ALL students."

- Eliminate self-contained classrooms and replace them with co-taught classrooms.

Add a monitoring element to assure districts are adhering to the vision and principles.

### **WHAT: Learning Resources**

- Students with special needs utilize specifically defined diagnoses and definitions to receive the specific services they require.
- Suggest Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for all students

### **HOW: Adult and Student Learning**

- Provide parent training and support, including communication with teachers. (several respondents)
- Provide teacher training and support, with emphasis on specific class work for all teachers on working with students with disabilities.
- Add a behavior management course to state certification requirements.
- Correlate concepts of Universal Design with the vision and principles of Universal Education. Allow teachers to look at their students on a continuum.
- Utilize interest-based learning.
- Base support on student need versus categorical eligibility or funding sources.
- Support - must be based on the unique needs of students rather than eligibility or categorical funding sources

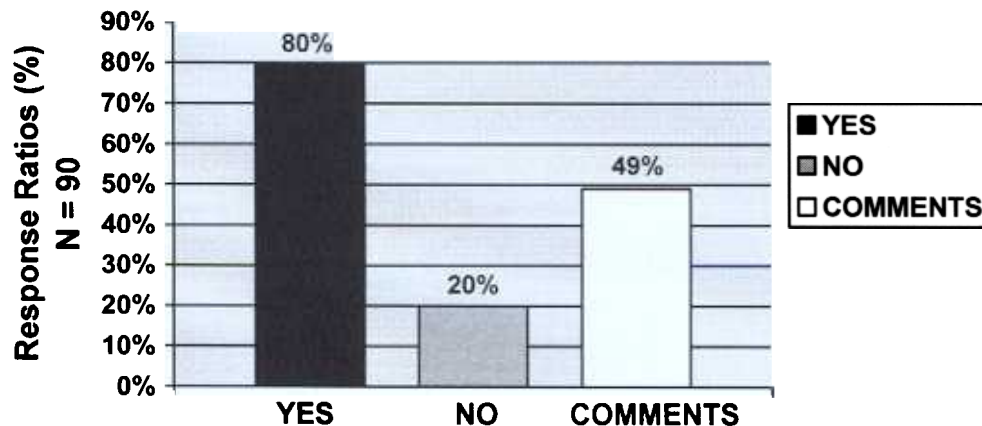
### **General Comments on Question 2:**

- This document should become "law," "mandatory," or should work towards "prohibiting segregation."
- The draft would be stronger if it prohibited segregation and mandated inclusive education.

### **QUESTION 3: Is the Document Clear?**

- Eighty percent (80%) indicated that the document was clear.
- 20% indicated it was not.
- Thirty-six percent (36%) of respondents submitted comments.
- Twenty-seven percent (27%) of "yes" votes provided additional comments.
- 94% of those who voted "no" provided such feedback.
- Much of this feedback concentrated on issues of language and purpose.

### QUESTION 3: Is the document clear?



### COMMENTS ON QUESTION 3

#### Language:

- Multiple YES and NO respondents mentioned language concerns.
- Educational language might not translate well for the general public.
- A brief introduction to principles would clarify the document.
- Those who voted NO were likely to address very specific comments of concern with the document's language.
- "Dr. Hughes' overview letter was very helpful to comprehension and a meeting with a member of the referent group made the concept much clearer."
- Substitute "all children" for "all students."
- Refine some of the terminology. Specifically the term "*throw-away*."
- Define "*Universal Education*" more clearly.

#### Matrix and Graphics:

- Matrix was "very clear and helpful," as were the graphics.

#### Purpose:

- 33% of respondents in this section questioned the purpose of the document. (YES and NO respondents)
- Most felt the document and principles were clear but questioned the next steps for implementation.
- Some respondents expressed a fear that this would be a device "in name only" and would not come to actual fruition in the classroom.
- "Must know WHAT will be done with this—how it will impact the operation and services of MDE."
- "Doesn't this already exist through various laws, regulations, and policies?"

- “As a parent and a principal, this vision and these principles are exactly the school I’d like my children to attend, and the kind of school I’m striving to achieve with the staff.”

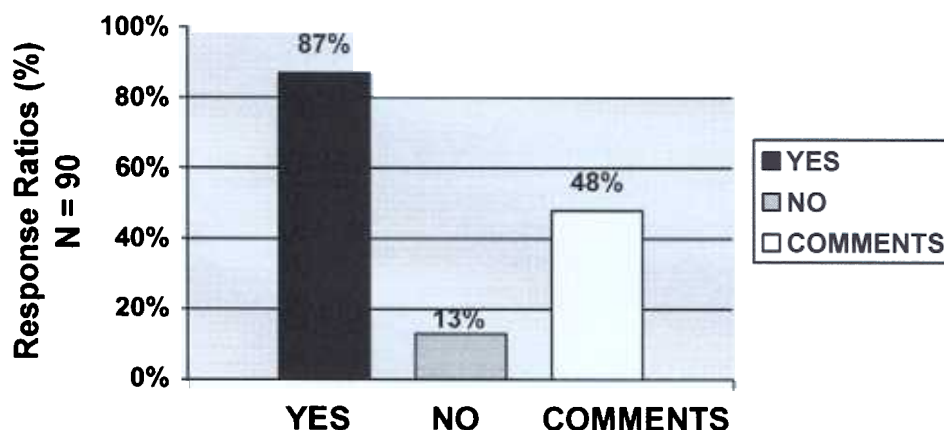
### Suggestions for clarifying the document:

- Add a brief introduction to the principles and categories.
- Specify to whom this document is targeted.
- “Provide more clarity as to the outcomes, purposes and implementations of this document.”

### QUESTION #4: Do you support the vision?

- Eighty-seven percent (87%) indicated support of the vision.
- Thirteen percent (13%) did not support the vision.
- Fifty-one percent (51%) of the respondents provided comments.
- Over seventy-one percent (71%) of the comments were positive/supportive.

#### QUESTION 4: Do you support the vision?



### Why did respondents support the Vision of Universal Education?

- Education is a great “social equalizer.”
- Students who learned to get along with diverse peers now would be better-adjusted adults, problem solvers, and citizens later.
- This vision provided learning supports and access to the general education curriculum for all students.
- Community support and community interaction.
- Could provide the impetus for a necessary attitudinal change within public education (i.e., teachers, administrators, etc.).
- Accountability could be spread across many parties, including the student.
- Supports and learning alternatives could make a difference in the classroom



### **What concerned respondents about the Vision of Universal Education?**

- There were concerns that all students would be educated in the same classroom, and related beliefs that all students' needs could not be adequately met in the same classroom at the same time.
- Much of the responsibility for implementing this vision would be placed upon the general education teacher.
- Need to look at teacher resources and training for this to work.
- Several questioned how this added to what general education teachers already do with overcrowded classrooms and limited resources.

### **Special Education Concentration**

- Forty-five percent (45%) of those providing comment specifically mentioned students with disabilities.
- 16% of respondents' comments mentioned other populations and only in a larger "ALL" sense of the term.
- Populations targeted for supportive comments by respondents were:
  - Students with disabilities;
  - Gifted students; and
  - Students with behavioral/emotional difficulties.

### **General Education Students**

General education students were mentioned several times as a population that would possibly benefit less because of Universal Education. The pattern of concern repeated was that these students would:

- Receive less attention;
- Receive fewer opportunities; and
- One respondent questioned how the safety of general education student could be protected.

### **General comments on Question 4:**

- Part of the power of this document is the consensus of educators, advocates, and other stakeholders in creating it.
- Universal education speaks to a necessary attitudinal change in public education.

### **QUESTION #5: In what situations would you see this document serving a useful purpose (include rationale)?**

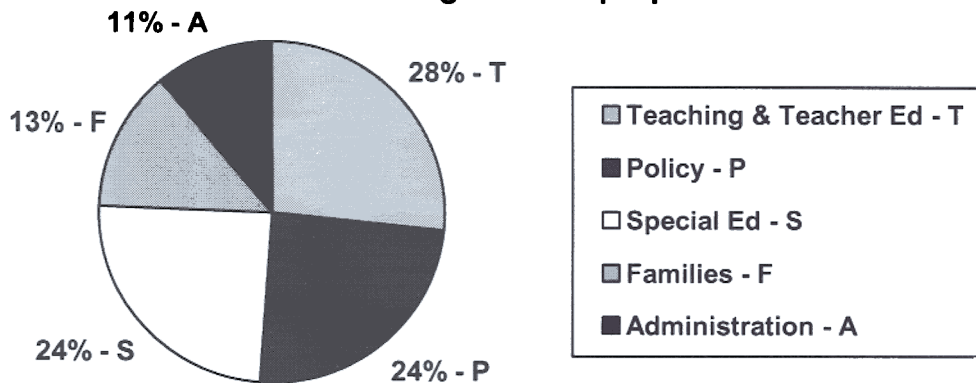
Eighty-six (86) responses were received for this question, indicating a high level of interest in how the Universal Education vision and principles could be utilized.

### **Most responses fell into five larger themes listed, in order of frequency:**

- Teaching and Teacher Education
- Special Education

Policy  
Parents and Families  
Administration

**QUESTION 5: In what situations would you see this document serving a useful purpose?**



A breakdown of comments for each theme shows where respondents identified priorities and purposes for Universal Education.

**Teaching/Teacher Education Applications:**

- Teachers need support and encouragement to present information in ways all learners can access.
- These policies needed to be responsive to the already overwhelming workload of general educators.
- Need to examine the teacher training institutions and the teacher certification process in the state.
- Several commented that they anticipated teaching issues to be driven and supported by the principles of Universal Education.

**Special Education/Gifted Education Applications:**

- Several described "Universal Education" synonymously with "full inclusion."
- Could assist students with a disability diagnosis in accessing the "Least Restrictive Environment" within their home school.
- Could bolster claims for specific services when a parent was in conflict with the school district.
- Potential use in due process hearings.
- IEP meetings

### **Policy Applications:**

- State Board of Education could use this document as a framework when making policy decisions. Any policy initiative should be evaluated in the context of this document.
- Provide a vision for multiple branches of government when making educational decisions.
- Schools need to move in this direction, but will need help in doing so.
- Suggested tying incentives or school funding to gain adherence to Universal Education vision and principles.

### **Parent/Family Applications:**

- Could support families trying to gain equal access to the curriculum for their children.
- Universal education could be used as a lens for parents when choosing a school district.

### **Administration Applications:**

- Creating a local school vision, supporting the school improvement process.
- Use as a starting point or a map for districts in trying to provide access to quality education for all its students.

### **Other Comments on Question 5:**

- These principles, if applied correctly, could end segregation in the public school system.
- Cannot see how this vision could be accomplished in its current form in the current educational system.
- One respondent expressed concern that educational dollars were scarce and the ability of funding such an initiative in current fiscal times was uncertain.

## **QUESTION 6: General Comments**

General comments were submitted by 76 respondents.

### **Supportive Comments: (sequenced by frequency)**

- Several respondents noted the critical importance of the vision and principles.
- Several more mentioned complete or enthusiastic support, with terminology such as "applaud," "bravo," and "Kids deserve it!"
- Diversity was mentioned several times as an important element of the document, as were empowerment and community.
- Four respondents identified themselves as parents who supported the vision and principles and were grateful for what the vision could mean for their children.

- A step in the evolution of the “culture of education.”
- A long overdue change could be provided by universal education.
- The “right” or “fair” thing to do.

**Supportive comments with questions/suggestions for next steps:**

- Distribute the information to more parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Discontinue self-contained classrooms and institute co-teaching in general education classrooms.
- Teacher education is vital to this process.
- How would universal education be funded?
- Several respondents expressed hope that the State Board of Education would adopt the Universal Education Vision and Principles as Board policy by either using Universal Education as a lens through which all policy would be viewed, or as a set of standards all policy would address.

**Mixed Support Comments:**

- Several noted that a financial analysis should be done before anything is adopted.

**No Support Comments:**

- One respondent provided a lengthy response that repeatedly noted, “This document should be rejected as a whole.”

## VISION OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

Every individual's success is important to our society. Each person deserves and needs a concerned, accepting educational community that values diversity and provides a comprehensive system of individual supports from birth to adulthood. Universal Education removes barriers, provides flexible and responsive supports and facilitates life-long learning for all.

The principles of Universal Education reflect the beliefs that in order to support the learning of all in achieving desired educational outcomes, there must be:

- ✦ A learning community...
- ✦ A learning environment (culture; resources).
- ✦ Adult and student learning...

Learners in all of their diversity come from a variety of backgrounds and life situations that may pose barriers to their access to, experience with, and progress in public education. The following graphic identifies some of those factors affecting today's learners from birth to adulthood.



\* Youth in transition are young people in temporary placements (i.e., awaiting foster care placement or institutional placement, staying temporarily with friends or relatives).

# PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

## *WHO: The learning community*

### ***Universal Education...***

- ✦ Builds a community that values diversity among all stakeholders and students, birth through adulthood.
- ✦ Engages broad-based working partnerships in removing all barriers that interfere, impede and / or prohibit access to the full range of learning opportunities.
- ✦ Recognizes and supports the critical, essential role that families/primary caregivers, in all of their diversity, play in the development and education of their children.
- ✦ Necessitates involvement of a broad-base of stakeholders that influence public policy and practice:
  - State Board of Education
  - Parent /teacher/student groups
  - Advocacy groups and organizations
  - Educational organizations and associations
  - Teacher training and preservice institutions
  - Legislature
  - Executive branch of government
  - Corrections/juvenile justice system
  - Human service system
  - Business and community organizations
  - Other stakeholders

## *WHAT: The learning environment (culture and resources)...*

### *The learning culture...*

### ***Universal Education...***

- ✦ Creates a safe and accepting learning environment in partnership with families and community characterized by mutual support, respect, and responsibility.
- ✦ Is guided by a commitment to educational excellence, democracy and social justice (equity) to create a sense of belonging.
- ✦ Honors the rights of all students to learn together.
- ✦ Supports and facilitates learning for all from birth through adulthood, including those who may be disenfranchised or marginalized, inhibiting in some way their achievement of individual education outcomes.

### *Learning resources...*

### ***Universal Education...***

- ✦ Assures access to resources and provides support for teachers and students.
- ✦ Provides resources to create flexible instruction and learning environments designed for all learners, building on strengths, needs and interests.
- ✦ Supports policies and practices to prevent learning problems stemming from physical, environmental, social, and emotional factors.
- ✦ Promotes leadership among stakeholder groups that guides continuous instructional improvement.

## *HOW: Adult and student learning.*

### ***Universal Education...***

- ✦ Ensures effective educator pre-service and on-going professional development.
- ✦ Implements effective, instructional practices, which align with individual learning styles, interests, and strengths moving the student from the edge of competence forward.
- ✦ Uses student performance and growth data to design, implement, evaluate, and adjust instruction, school environment and professional development.
- ✦ Ensures that students will be assessed based on growth in addition to broad, standardized tests or benchmarks of achievement.